

FAITH OF THE PEOPLE IN THE JUSTICE OF THE VILLAGE COUNCIL AND RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES AS OPPOSED TO MODERN COURTS

(MUNSHI PREMCHAND'S 'PANCH PARMESHWAR')

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ABSTRACT

Munshi Premchand (1880-1936) belongs to the literary culture and tradition of two languages, namely Urdu and Hindi and pioneered modern fiction writing in them.

He has been the epic writer of social realism, etching the Indian countryside of villages and small towns in his fiction in such intense and arresting details that they became a pioneering mode of representation of the spaces unrepresented earlier in Hindu-Urdu fiction. His novels and short stories project different aspirations of society.

Panch Parmeshwar is one such short story of Premchand which brings out the fibre of twisted friendship among two best friends who gradually turn into foes. Premchand has not only reflected the variations in relations but also has tried to reflect the underlying notion of friendship; whether Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Sikh.

Friendship is unconditional and unbiased and free like the spirit. The story reflected how ideally justice is above all whether it comes to friendship or any relationship. Dispensing fair justice has always been a sensitive issue which is really not an easy task for one. The one sitting on the 'Judgment Seat' cannot be subjective and biased. An ideal judge is always objective. The faith of people in the position of Surpanch to deliver justice rising above all greed and human frailties echoes as the paramount voice of the story.

KEYWORDS: Justice, Panch Parmeshwar, Social, Realism & Surpanch

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INTRODUCTION

Munshi Premchand, the effective story teller who's 'Panch Parmeshwar' grips readers through generations; the story at a glance in English and translated into French.

Panch Parmeshwar is one of the excellent writings of Munshi Premchand which shows us the right way to follow the principles of life, a difficult path of honesty and principles. It takes a lot of courage to stick with a fair and unbiased decision to be just, leaving relations behind and keeping justice above all. There are two main characters in this story named Algu Chaudhary and Jumman Sheikh who were best friends from childhood. They were together in each other's hard times. Friendship of both gets distorted when Algu was chosen to become the Surpanch (justice) for the case of Jumman Sheikh and her khala (aunt). Jumman Sheikh thought that he would win the verdict because Algu is his best friend but above all Algu chooses the path of justice over friendship and Algu gives an unbiased verdict against Jumman. Jumman was shocked with the verdict and vows to ruin the life of Algu. That is how best friends became foes in a single day forgetting all sweet old memories and this inseparable

relation of friendship gets destroyed. Few years later, the story takes a shocking turn when Jumman Sheikh gets a great opportunity to take revenge from Algu Chaudhary as Algu knocks the door of Panchayat to get Justice against Samjhu Sahu.

Algu had been a fine pair of oxen which he bought from Batesar. It was just a chance that one of the oxen died just after the month of Jumman's panchayat and single the ox became useless. Algu was in financial crisis and he decides to sell that ox. Samjhu Sahu purchases it but he doesn't pay the complete amount to Algu and asks for some time to pay. By the time Algu gets his money, the ox dies because of the abuse of his capacity and overloading. Algu doesnot get any money for that ox after his death. Then comes the ball in the court of Jumman Sheikh when Samjhu elects Jumman to be the Surpanch of the case. Where everyone including Algu was sure that Samjhu would win the case due to animosity in Jumman towards Algu but the sense of responsibility towards the high office of Surpanch becomes conscious in Jumman. He realized that at this moment he was seated on the highest throne of justice and righteousness. He also realized that whatever he speaks now would be considered as the words of God. Keeping all the ethics in mind, Jumman shows the justice above all and once again Algu and Jumman became friends.

Panch Parmeshwar est l'un des écrits excellents de Munshi Premchand qui nous montre la bonne façon de suivre les principes de la vie, mais il est très difficile de suivre le chemin de l'honnêteté et des principes. Il faut beaucoup de courage pour s'en tenir à une décision juste et impartiale d'être juste, de quitter les relations et de maintenir la justice par-dessus tout. équitable. Il ya deux personnages principaux dans cette histoire nommée Algu Chaudhary et Jumman Sheikh qui étaient les meilleurs amis de l'enfance. Ils étaient ensemble dans les moments difficiles de l'autre. L'amitié des deux se déforme quand Algu a été choisi pour devenir le Surpanch (justice) pour le cas de Jumman Sheikh et son khala (tante). Jumman Sheikh a pensé qu'il remporterait le verdict parce qu'Algu est son meilleur ami mais par-dessus tout Algu choisit le chemin de la justice alors l'amitié et Algu donne le verdict impartial contre Jumman. Jumman a été choqué par le verdict et déterminé à ruiner la vie d' Algu. C'est ainsi que les meilleurs amis deviennent des ennemis en un seul jour oubliant tous les vieux souvenirs doux et ce rapport inséparable de l'amitié est détruit. Quelques années plus tard, l'histoire a pris un tour choquant lorsque Jumman Sheikh a eu une excellente occasion de se venger d'Algu Chaudhary comme Algu a frappé la porte de Panchayat pour obtenir Justice contre Samjhu Sahu.

Il y avait eu une belle paire de bœufs que Algu acheta à Batesar. C'était juste une chance que l'un des bœufs soit mort juste après le mois du panchayat de Jumman et que le bœuf simple ne servît à rien. Quelques années plus tard, l'histoire a pris un tour choquant lorsque Jumman Sheikh a eu une excellente occasion de se venger d'Algu Chaudhary comme Algu a frappé la porte de Panchayat pour obtenir Justice contre Samjhu Sahu. Il y avait eu une belle paire de bœufs qu'Algu acheta de Batesar. C'était juste une chance que l'un des bœufs soit mort juste après le mois du panchayat de Jumman et le bœuf seul est d'aucune utilité. Algu était en crise financière et il a décidé de vendre ce bœuf. Samjhu Sahu l'a acheté mais il n'a pas payé le montant complet à Algu et a demandé un certain temps pour payer. Au moment où Algu reçoit son argent, le boeuf est mort à cause de l'abus de sa capacité et étant surchargé tout le temps. Algu n'a jamais eu d'argent pour ce bœuf après sa mort. Puis vient le ballon dans la cour de Jumman Sheikh quand Samjhu l'a élu pour être le Surpanch de l'affaire. Où tout le monde, y compris Algu était sûr que Samjhu remporterait l'affaire en raison de l'animosité dans Jumman vers Algu mais le sens de la responsabilité vers l'haut bureau de Surpanch est devenu conscient dans Jumman. Il se rendit compte qu'à ce moment il était assis sur le plus haut trône de justice et de droiture. Il a aussi réalisé que tout ce qu'il parle maintenant serait considéré comme les paroles de Dieu. Gardant toute l'éthique à l'esprit, Jumman a

montré la justice par-dessus tout et encore une fois Algu et Jumman sont devenus les meilleurs amis.

“That unity is strength is not merely a copybook maxim but a rule of life is in no case so clearly illustrated as in the problem of Hindu – Muslim Unity”. : Mahatma Gandhi

Panch Parmeshwar has many aspects pointing towards the real socialism or realism in society. Munshi Premchand wrote many short stories reflecting social realities which greatly impacted the society. The greatest aspect which is rare to find is the Hindu-Muslim Unity not only in personal relation but also in dispensing justice. Dispensing fair justice has always been a sensitive issue in India, a land of diverse cultures. Since, the advent of British in India systemization of uniform civil court was always a challenge. Different religious laws and their strength to uphold the system often promotes decentralization of power. The Indian panchayat is one of the finest examples of dispensing justice among those who are directly affected.

Panch Parmeshwar is the story of two childhood friends, Jumman Sheikh and Algu Chaudhry. When Algu Chaudhry became the ‘mukhiya’ of Panch and dispensed fair verdict which went against his best friend Jumman. Friends became foes. But in due course, when Jumman became the ‘Surpanch’ and sat on the judgment seat, his conscious could not overlook accountability and responsibility. Jumman realized the dignity of the post and decided to follow the path of justice. The one sitting on the judgment seat cannot be subjective and biased. An ideal judge is always objective and unbiased.

The truth upholds opposition and places relationship between two beings higher. The story of Panch Parmeshwar brings out beauty of human relationships beyond the narrow boundaries of religion as shown in the context of Jumman Sheikh and Algu Chaudhary. They placed truth and justice by a code of ethics accepted universally.

Premchand depicted the sense of universality very beautifully in his short story ‘Panch Parmeshwar’. It has also focused on certain shades of personality; we can say this story to decode the hobbesian notion of human beings. There is always a brighter side to each individual, for example: Jumman Sheikh, though influenced in the glory of wealth accumulated by him through wrong means did support the case of Algu because Algu’s case was true. Even Algu did the same on the basis of the concept of justice. He did not support his old friend Jumman because Jumman’s case was false. This depiction of Premchand makes us believe in the hidden virtue of truthfulness within every soul.

The story portrays the materialistic vision outlook of the society. The blindfolded vision enfolded with greed makes a person unjust. Jumman Sheikh’s aunt, who was thoroughly exploited by Jumman for her property begged for justice and nobody supported her. She was old, helpless and childless. She believed in the Panch and therefore, sought justice from the Surpanch. Justice spreads its wings to ponder the glory of solace as it does in the case of Jumman Sheikh and Khala.

The gist of the story reveals the major shift in human behavior and human tendency to do justice to the duty entailed. The faith of people in the position of Surpanch to deliver justice rising above all greed and human frailties is to dispense justice.

As mentioned in Bhagwad Geeta, Chapter 4, Verse 7-8:

“Yada yada hi dharmasya glanirbhavati bharata

Abhythanamadharmasya tadatmanam srijamyaham

Paritranya sadhunan vinashay cha dushtkritam

Dharmasaneethapanarthay, sambhavami yuge yuge”

The establishment of Dharma (Justice) over Adharma (Injustice) on earth also symbolizes the presence of traits of both in each and every human being. Only one trait dominates at a time, depending on the situation.

This story has reflected the fact that friendship is beyond religious conflicts. The relation between Jumman and Algu clearly defines that in the Indian sub-continent, bonds are created irrespective of caste, creed and religion.

Friendship knows no boundaries, status, or creed. It is simply a strong rapport between two souls. It is something that flows naturally between friends. Trust is of utmost importance in friendship because only trust can bind two people together.

‘*Mitrata ka moolmantra bhi yahi hai*’, this statement in the story successfully establishes and justifies this notion but above all lays humanity which is established through justice.

It’s the brilliance of Premchand that in the same story friendship, justice, tradition of Gurukul and the pre-established conventions of the society are prudently woven together.

‘*Vidya padne se nhi ati, jo kuch hota hai guru k aashirwad se hota hai*’.

The basic thought behind these lines is the tradition of Gurukul, i.e., the respect and love for the guru. It is majorly conceived in Indian Institutions that ‘Gurur-Brahmaa Gurur-Vishnur Gurur-Devo Maheshvarah. Gurureva Param Brahma Tasmai Shri Gurave Namah||1||’ which shows that wisdom lies at the feet of Guru (Master). In Panch Parmeshwar, common grounding of belief is deeply engrained as suggested in the Indian society.

‘*Vidya uske bhagya me hi nhi thi, toh kese ati?*’

Another trait of Indian society emerges is the fact that the condition of the old, aged, helpless people is degenerating. The same aunt of Jumman Sheikh, Khala was loved and cared when she was wealthy but she became a burden gradually. Jumman Sheikh, did every possible thing to inherit her property. She, now often has to face the ridiculous comments of Jumman Sheikh and his wife. Panch Parmeshwar successfully brings out this exploitation in the story.

The title of the story denotes the importance and dignity of the ‘Panch’ so much so that Premchand allotted the title of ‘Parmeshwar’ to the Panch. In the Indian ethos, ‘Parmeshwar’ word was readily used for anything of prime importance. We can say that Panch Parmeshwar re-establishes the age-old milestone of Indian social order. Justice prevailed above all whether it was friendship or judicial review. Jumman Sheikh expected that the case will be in his favour due to his social contacts and steadfast friendship with Algu, the Surpanch. The decision of the Panch was a slap of justice on the face of Jumman, “As you sow, so shall you reap” is what Jumman got.

Premchand, as usual gives a clear message of the law of karma as mentioned in Bhagwad Geeta. According to this, actions and deeds are like seeds. Jumman earned fame and wealth due to his good deeds but the lust of money and property resulted in his punishment.

Premchand also doesn’t miss a chance to symbolize acts and events through birds and animals in his story. What’s actually surprising and interesting is that all of them talk about the theme of the story.

'Ped ki daliyon per baithi 'Suk' mandali me yeh prashna chida hua tha ki manushyon ko unhe bemurauwat kehne ka kya adhikar hai, jab unhe swayan apne mitron se daga karne se sankoch nahi hota'

Premchand transforms the readers to the virtual world of the incident is one of the reasons, why the readers are so attached to the works of Premchand. Even the crows discussed about justice and that too about the human behavior of betrayal.

In the panchayat summoned to work on the case of Algu chaudhary and Samjhu Shahu, it seemed that Jumman will certainly justify the human behavior of revenge by placing verdict against Algu but the end justified the title of the story 'Panch Parmeshwar'.

'Apne uttardayitwa ka gyan bahudha hamare sankuchit vyawaharon ka sudharak hota hai'

This statement speaks a lot. It reflects two primary qualities of human behavior intermingled in each other. primarily, 'sankuchit vyawaharon', is the basic flaw of layman's narrow mindedness and carelessness while the second 'uttardayitwa ka gyan' highlights the impact of responsibility and accountability on human being.

'Gyan hamara vishwasniya path pradarshak ban jaata hai'

The importance of being aware of responsibilities is highlighted in which one effective human behavior 'responsibility' overshadows the other flaws of life 'revenge', 'narrow mindedness', 'criticism' etc. It is the flawless way of description of Premchand that the characters in his story are always designed to add weight to the theme of the story. Premchand is also famous for his anthology. The carefully chosen words itself depict the ambience of each and every character which in turn jointly justify the theme of the story along with individual identity of each and every character.

Premchand has given due importance to the democratic set-up of the then-India and the society. The value of 'panch' signifies the value of democratic structure and above all the slogan "Panch Parmeshwar ki jai" denotes the faith and deep belief of people in the said system. The soliloquy of Jumman Sheikh after becoming the surpanch, presents the philosophical messages of Upanishads in which the morals and ideals to be followed by a human being is always designed on the lines of divine rules. Although being mortal, the characters of Premchand look divine because they often relate and discuss their activities with divine characters.

"Mere muh se is samay jo kuch niklega, vah dev vani ke sadrish hai- aur dev vani me mere mano-vikaro ka kadapi samavesh na hona chahiye. Mujhe satya se jau bhar bhi talna uchit nahi"

Just like the last panchayat, the verdict came as a surprise for the accused. Earlier, Jumman as an accused was very confident of verdict in his favour but it came against him. Now, Algu naturally was sure about the verdict to be against him but it came in his favour. Both the panchayat and the Panch signify the crude human behavior of expectation of partial decision and revenge but in both the cases, the divine justice prevailed.

CONCLUSIONS

Panch Parmeshwar is not only a story but a guide of human behavior towards society. Different traits of behavior like revenge, expectations, criticism, narrow-mindedness, etc. are substantially mentioned in such a way that while being reflected in the story, they don't seem to be human vices but normal human psychology. Society has to move along with these vices of human beings. Justice above all conquers these vices, very nicely presented as 'Pratitya Samutpada' in Buddhism which recommends a particular 'eightfold path' to achieve the same. Somewhere in the story Premchand has

very successfully attached divinity to the post of Panch. The awareness of a responsibility often alters our narrow outlook. When we lose our way this awareness becomes our guide.

“Aaj mujhe gyat hua ki Panch k pad per beth kar na koi kisi ka dost hota hai na dushman. Panch ki zuban se khuda bolta hai”.

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